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SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER ADDRESSES NATIONAL ASSEMBLY -
REPORTS ON GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. In his first official policy speech since his appointment in March, Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate outlined his government's accomplishments over the last six months before the National Assembly on October 11. Despite Kouyate's 80 minutes discourse, deputies were reportedly disappointed with the speech's overall lack of substance. Widely anticipated as Kouyate's opportunity to present a defining, forward-looking strategy for the Guinean Government, the general perception was that Kouyate's speech failed to deliver what people were hoping for. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate spoke for 80 minutes before the Guinean National Assembly during which he detailed the consensus government's accomplishments over the last six months. Seen by many observers as representing Kouyate's first official policy statement since he became head of government in March, there were 85 National Assembly deputies present (out of 107), which internet press reported as significantly higher than average. At least six ministers attended as part of Kouyate's delegation, including the ministers of health, public works, economic control, mines, education, and labor. In addition to poloff, representatives from the UNDP, the EU, and Germany were present. The speech attracted extensive press coverage including national radio and television, print media, and Radio France and BBC correspondents.

KOYUATE FOCUSES ON GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

¶3. (SBU) Kouyate's speech was widely anticipated as an opportunity for him to define a forward-looking policy strategy. Instead, Kouyate focused on outlining his government's recent accomplishments while broadly defining key government objectives, which included providing for national unity, an independent judiciary, maximum employment for youth, the re-establishment of state authority, readjustment of macro-economic imbalances, promotion of political and social dialogue, and promotion of good governance.

¶4. (U) Linking accomplishments to the broader policy objectives listed above, Kouyate spent most of his time discussing his administrative restructuring efforts such as appointment of new ministers, governors and prefects; progress on infrastructure development such as a better power supply and road improvements; efforts to fight criminal activity and drug trafficking; recruitment of 12,000 new graduates to fill government jobs; progress towards a return to an IMF funded program; and his success in attracting more foreign aid. Kouyate also highlighted his recent appointment of the commission to investigate alleged human rights abuses committed during the January/February strikes, saying & people believed me incapable of establishing this

commission and now that it has been created, I will ensure that it works correctly.⁸

¶15. (U) Touching briefly on future initiatives for his government, Kouyate said that he plans to continue to fight corruption. He specifically mentioned the embezzlement case against controversial millionaire Mamadou Syllah, stating that the case would be pursued. Kouyate also commented on his continued priority for combating HIV infection and AIDS. He briefly mentioned upcoming legislative elections saying that the National Independent Electoral Commission has been named, but did not provide any further details.

AUDIENCE REACTIONS

¶16. (SBU) While the audience was generally quiet, although perhaps not entirely attentive throughout the lengthy discourse, some of Kouyate's statements were met with audible grumblings from the Assembly. When Kouyate mentioned completion of a specific road project, the audience was noticeably agitated and contacts later told poloff that the road in question has not actually been finished. Comments about government successes in achieving lower prices for rice and other commodities were also met with audible disagreement. Kouyate took credit for providing tens of thousands of free mosquito nets to pregnant women and children in rural areas although reportedly, it was actually the Government of Japan that donated the nets to Guinea.

¶17. (SBU) Audience interest visibly perked up when National Assembly deputies were given the opportunity to pose questions directly to the Prime Minister. Over forty

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questions were asked, which were noted by his delegation. Kouyate was initially supposed to orally respond to questions on October 12, but instead will submit written responses to the National Assembly at a later, unspecified date. Among the questions asked were the following:

- Why has the Prime Minister not traveled to the interior of the country in order to listen to popular concerns?
- What is the consensus government doing to rebuild property destroyed in January and February?
- Why were the newly appointed prefects and governors disproportionately represented from the prime minister's own ethnic group and from his hometown?
- Why are politicians manipulating and dividing youth organizations?
- Could the government provide a balance sheet reflecting profits and losses with respect to rice sales?
- Why is the government looking to spend a large sum of money on the 50th anniversary celebration when the country lacks basic infrastructure?
- Does the Prime Minister belong to the majority party or to any of the existing opposition parties? Does he intend to create his own political party?
- What is the nature of Kouyate's relationship with President Conte?
- What are Kouyate's intentions with respect to Libya?

¶18. (U) According to local press reports, a number of deputies were dissatisfied with Kouyate's speech. One was quoted as saying that rather than speaking to the general political situation, Kouyate simply reported on his government's activities. Another deputy reportedly said

that there were a number of inaccuracies: &some of the activities he cited were initiated by his predecessors.⁸ Other deputies reportedly indicated that the Prime Minister exaggerated some of his accomplishments by taking credit for programs sponsored by the donor community. A deputy representing the opposition told reporters that the speech left him hungry, referring to a lack of political substance.

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) Despite nearly 80 minutes of uninterrupted speaking, Kouyate's speech seemed to lack the substance people were looking for. The audience, both within the room, and the wider audience tuning in via radio and television, were reportedly anticipating a more forward-thinking strategic outline that would define government priorities and activities over the next few months. Instead, they were presented with a lengthy overview of government accomplishments, the success of a number of which may be perceived as debatable.

¶10. (SBU) Strong attendance on the part of National Assembly deputies suggests that they were recognizing Kouyate as a legitimate government leader. At the same time, this is the audience least likely to support Kouyate given that most of them are part of the old regime, represented by the ruling Party for Unity and Progress. They asked a number of hard hitting questions and it is likely that Kouyate's responses will be eagerly anticipated. END COMMENT.

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